

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

Because, at the head of this short article, I write the above honorable name, I do not propose to write an obituary, or to make any lengthy comments upon the life of the great man who bore it. We cannot well write the obituary of a person whom we did not intimately know. I only wish to touch upon a few of his sayings, and in a general way comment upon his life.

Dr. Holmes was a philosopher. He had a bright sunny disposition, and life went well with him. These two things combined caused him to take a happy view of life.

Many of his poems are extremely humorous.

While he bore the title of "Doctor," the world knew little of him as a practicing physician, indeed there used to be a common saying, that he never had but one patient. I was not familiar enough with him to know whether this was true or not. While in the technical sense it may have been true, in the broad sense he had many a patient, and his medicine, if we may so call his contributions to the world, was a wholesome remedy to many a poor soul struggling through life. He contributed to the mirth of the world, and his mirth was of a high order; and this we think was a good medicine to his fellow men; a medicine that many a patient needs, and one that many took with good results. So in this broad sense he had many a patient, and many a patient who took his medicine derived much benefit therefrom.

Somehow or other, the world has, from the beginning of history, had rather a poor idea of the present; that is the majority of the world has had a poor opinion of their fellow-men, who were contemporary with them; and with whom even they were closely intimate when alive and amid the severest struggles that surrounded them.

What would not the world give for a mere glance at the daily struggles of the heroic men of the past, when, despised by their fellowmen, they were really doing the best work of their lives; though surrounded and hampered by the meanness of their associates, as well as by the common every-day duties of life, whereby they must needs obtain a livelihood, at the sacrifice of time that might, were they favored with the good will of the world, devote to the higher duties of life that are more than life.

After a man is dead, how earnestly does the world study his life; and they linger upon every little act, no matter how trivial, that the man did; and how they like to study all the incidents of his life; and how charitable are they towards all his acts; and how earnestly do they condemn the acts of their contemporaries, who in life were mean and uncharitable towards them. "Such is life." When death opens the immortal gates, charity enters where it had never entered before.

Dr. Holmes had no very great or severe struggle with the world. Fortune favored him with an early start, so there was little of the struggle that

has been the experience of many of the world's best men. But even under these most favored surroundings he did not receive from the present the admiration that he will receive from the future. Sure, there were some charitable souls who appreciated him, probably from the first, but they were not a legion. His start in life was good, and all through his many years we see him the same genial soul, with a broad sympathy for his fellow men; and this broad sympathy is what will endear him to the future, and cause his name to be inscribed upon the walls of our Walhalla, where generations yet unborn shall learn of his genial nature and of his noble works.

The Rev. Edward Everett Hale says that he was a Unitarian. Many of us did not know before what his theology was, and I do not think the world even stopped to inquire what was the creed of the man who wrote the many patriotic and humorous poems and wise sayings that came from his pen. All of his works were of a high and genial, and we might say *deep* order. The world will cherish them, and will never forget them and their author.

How beautiful that saying of his, "I would not have thee consistent, but simply true;" and this reflects the whole life of the noble soul who uttered it. He was "simply true;" and "simply true;" he would have the whole world. He does not say that he would not have the world *consistent*; at least we do not thus interpret him. In this he is evidently touching upon another line of thought—that of *truth* as compared with mere consistency. The worst knave that ever lived might be consistent, or apparently so, when his whole life might be as false as Satan is represented to be. An individual might be "as true as steel," and yet for the time being appear to be false. But if the man is *simply true*, he will, even under the most trying circumstances be honest to himself; and this honesty will in due time receive the high commendation of his fellow-men, or even better, be recorded in the Book of Gold.

We all remember the "One horse shay," that was made so strong in all its parts that it endured, intact as a whole, for many and many a year. Year in year out it needed no repairs. It was strong and durable in all its parts; no one part wore out before the other. The parts were well balanced and strong, so as a whole it was strong and durable. But after being in use for generations, and still apparently strong, finally one day it went all to pieces, like a fractured Prince Rupert-drop; and thus ended the life of the author of the "One horse shay." He lived many many years. He passed the four score mark by a number of years; and while not a robust man, was in his usual health, with an active mind up to the end, when there came the summons for the body to surrender the spirit that had so many years dwelt within it; and like the "One horse shay," the body was rent asunder, and the spirit fled to join the enumerable bands that have gone the way before him. May his soul progress in peace.

I. P. N.

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